



EURO-info

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PROPOSES A REVISION OF THE STRUCTURAL FUNDS

In response to the invitation made at the European Council in Edinburgh on 11 and 12 December 1992 for the Commission to put forward proposals for revising the regulations relating to the structural funds from 1994 to the end of 1999, on 24 March 1993, the Commission proposed modifications to the regulations governing the operation of the three Community structural funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund) and a regulation setting up a financial guidance instrument for the fishing industry (IFOP)¹. The 17 Members of the Commission had already proposed to the Twelve, on 24 February, to review the list of eligible regions².

Since 1989, to attempt to overcome regional disparities, the Community has only been granting regional and social aids to clearly-defined geographical areas and social categories, which are at a significant disadvantage compared with the average for the Europe of the Twelve.

Three types of regions will also benefit from Community aids: those whose development has lagged behind significantly — with per capita GDP of less than 75% of the Community average; those which are suffering from the decline of traditional industries, with the key indicator being the rate of unemployment; finally, rural areas threatened by the population leaving the countryside and by increasing poverty.

For the years from 1994 to 1999, the European Commission wishes to continue to support the same types of regions, but with a few modifications. The list of regions officially recognized as having 'development' which has lagged behind contains 10 new regions³. Furthermore, the Commission proposes keeping the present criteria for determining which zones are 'in industrial decline' dependence on industry, high unemployment and drop in the number of jobs available; but it also wishes to help regions which do not strictly meet the criteria, but which are threatened with industrial decline. Likewise, the Commission is not proposing major changes with regard to vulnerable rural areas. Aids will mainly be concentrated in those regions where the population is leaving the countryside.

(continued on page 2)

¹ COM(93) 124

² COM(93) 67

³ It would still cover Greece, The Irish Republic, Portugal, Corsica and the French 'départements d'Outre-mer' and Northern Ireland. The Commission proposes to add Eastern Germany (the 5 new Länder of the Federal Republic, plus East Berlin), the Belgian province of Hainaut and two regions in the United Kingdom: Merseyside around Liverpool and the Highlands and Islands of Northern Scotland. In Spain, Cantabria would be added to the regions of the South and West of the country which are already on the list of regions whose development has lagged behind. In Italy, the Mezzogiorno remains in the same category, but the Commission proposes to exclude the Abruzzi region.

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As for social aids, which are covered by the European Social Fund, the Commission is proposing to continue to combat long-term unemployment, but no longer restricting aid to people who have been unemployed for more than one year. Likewise, aids intended to encourage young people's adaptation to the world of work will remain on the agenda, without overlooking actions aimed at facilitating the integration into the labour market of people who are victims of social exclusion.

But the Commission also wishes to prevent unemployment, by facilitating the adaptation of workers to radical changes in industry, and to changes brought about by the introduction of new production systems. In this context, the European Social Fund will contribute to improving employment opportunities by vocational training and re-training. This assistance will, in principle, reach all workers affected by industrial changes, in whatever sector they may work, and in whatever employment catchment area. It is proposed that the Community concentrate its activities on the following areas:

- training connected with the introduction, use and development of new or improved production methods, including new management techniques, new technologies and the changing requirements of the market and society, in particular with regard to the protection of the environment. Particular attention should be devoted to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), to enable them to take part in training courses;
- training connected with the adaptation required for SMEs to new forms of cooperation with large companies, particularly in the context of subcontracting.

The Heads of State and Government of the Twelve took the decision last December in Edinburgh: to help regions and social categories with problems, the Commission will be able to spend more than 161 billion ECU between 1993 and 1999, or 23 billion ECU per year, compared with 13 billion between 1988 and 1992. In total, the regions and social categories benefiting from all these aids could exceed 50% of the Community's population. The Commission proposals have still to be approved by the Ministers of the Twelve.

'COMMERCE 2000' **promoting the adoption of modern business methods**

The sector of commerce and distribution currently employs 18 million people in the European Community, and contains some 4.2 million companies, with 4.19 million of these being SMEs. It has changed radically over recent years, and the pattern of change has been marked by the creation of the internal market and the increasing use of new information and communication technologies which offer the distributive trades new economic prospects. However, while these factors of business development in Europe represent an opportunity for the most dynamic firms, SMEs in the distributive trades are not always in a position to benefit from new technologies to reach a new clientele, and deal with increased competition in an efficient way.

This is the context in which the European Community launched the COMMERCE 2000 initiative in 1991, to encourage economic operators to adopt a strategy of cooperation between companies using modern management practices (just in time, quick response), which use EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) technologies.

The first results of this action were very significant: applications for Community financial contributions amounted to some 30 million ECUs. The Commission was not able to grant all these applications, and was only able to grant aids of 2 million ECUs. Nevertheless, this did enable 11 projects, representing a total figure of 10 million ECUs of actions, to be set up in varied sectors of business like domestic electrical appliances, furniture, sports equipment, food, clothing and the press.

In order to discuss and review the results of this initiative, and the impact of the single market on the distributive trades, the European Commission and the Economic and Social Committee of the EC decided to organize a major conference, which will be held in Brussels on 14 and 15 June 1993. The 'COMMERCE 2000' symposium will bring together politicians, representatives of the interest groups concerned, those working in the distributive trades, market analysts and technical experts, and is aimed at promoting the adoption of modern business methods.

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EUROPARTENARIAT: IN LILLE ON 17 AND 18 JUNE 1993

Organized on the initiative of the European Commission as part of its regional policy and enterprise policy, this eighth EUROPARTENARIAT event is targeted at Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in regions which are facing major challenges in restructuring their industrial base, and which are currently on the lookout for ways of diversifying, and finding promising new market niches. On 17 and 18 June, 414 SMEs in North-Eastern France, or more precisely, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Picardy, Champagne-Ardenne and Lorraine regions, will play host in Lille to entrepreneurs from all over the European Community, and from the EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries, Central and Eastern Europe, and the countries from the Mediterranean rim. Faithful to its traditional role, which is to stimulate and generate contacts and business, technical or financial cooperation, EUROPARTENARIAT gives the selected region a unique opportunity to present the business opportunities which exist there. A 'Catalogue' which is distributed very widely in the European Community and outside it, presents a profile of each of the 414 SMEs selected, and their cooperation projects. Two days of meetings — in Lille on 17 and 18 June 1993 — will enable local entrepreneurs to have direct business contacts (appointments fixed beforehand — presence of interpreters) in order to discuss the cooperation plans set out in the catalogue in greater detail. A second EUROPARTENARIAT event in 1993 is planned for Scotland. The meetings between entrepreneurs will be held in Glasgow on 13 and 14 December.

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E.E.I.G.: facilitating development of inter-company cooperation

With the single market, working on an international scale has become a necessity for SMEs who can no longer restrict themselves to their regional or national market. To facilitate the development of inter-company cooperation, the economic actors of the European Community have had at their disposal since 1st July 1989, the European Economic Interest Group (EEIG)⁴, a specific instrument for trans-national cooperation, which can be used to facilitate or develop the economic activities of its members, improve or increase the results of this activity. The EEIG is a flexible form of association which fits into a legal framework enabling its members to cooperate on the realization of a specific project, while ensuring that they retain their economic and legal independence in running their own business. This is an intermediate form between a mere cooperation contract and a company, which under certain conditions, enables business to be transacted internationally.

By making the EEIG very flexible — both from the point of view of formation (a written contract is sufficient), and operation (the wish of the parties remains the principle), and financing (absence of compulsory capital) — the Community's intention was to bring it within reach of the largest possible number of companies, and SMEs in particular, for the most diverse projects: joint R&D, joint manufacturing, buying or sales, formation of multi-disciplinary consortia for submission of tenders. Now it is possible to set up European Economic Interest Groups in all Member States. On the basis of formation notices published in the Official Journal of the European Communities, at the beginning of March 1993, there were 431 EEIGs in business.

To help companies with plans for transnational cooperation to assess the suitability of setting up an EEIG, Directorate General XXIII of the Commission of the European Communities will shortly be distributing a brochure entitled 'EEIG, emergence of a new form of European cooperation'. Review of experience after 3 years. This publication, which contains data about EEIG on the basis of existing experience will be available in the nine Community languages.

For further information: Commission of the European Communities
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INTERPRISE: to encourage partnership arrangements in Europe

The INTERPRISE programme is aimed at stimulating contacts between companies in the Community. Three regions in three Community countries must join forces to organize a meeting of businesses, with the objective of bringing entrepreneurs into contact with one another, with a view to setting up commercial, technical and financial cooperation. A programme between three regions of the Community can extend to one or more regions outside the Community.

Projects supported in the context of INTERPRISE must include at least the following phases: identification and selection of businesses in the regions concerned, which are interested in setting up a cooperation agreement with companies from other participating regions; publication and distribution of a catalogue setting out the reasons for cooperation; organization of an event in the context of which direct contacts are set up between participating companies (appointments arranged in advance, presence of interpreters).

⁴ This legal entity results from the adoption on 25.07.1985 of EEC Regulation no. 2137/85, published in OJ of the EC L 199 dated 31.07.85

The following events will be organized in the context of INTERPRISE during the month of May:

4th HANSA BUSINESS DAYS

Meeting date: 6 May 1993 in Copenhagen (Denmark)

Countries concerned: Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Baltic States

Sectors of activity: food, mechanical engineering, construction, clothing etc.

Organization: BCCA — Mr. A. MARTENS — Lorentzendam 24, D-2300 Kiel 1 — P.O. Box 2640 — Tel.: (49) 431 51 94-209 — Fax: (49) 431 51 94-209

EUROPARTNERS 93

Meeting dates: 13 and 14 May 1993 in Lyon (France)

Countries concerned: France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Germany, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Switzerland.

Sectors of activity: subcontracting in mechanical engineering, metal transformation, surface treatments, conversion of plastics, rubber, composite materials, electrical engineering and electronics.

Organization: Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Lyon — Mr. Gilles GAQUERE — rue de la Bourse, 20 — F-69289 LYON CEDEX 02 — Tel.: (33)7240 5858 — Fax: (33)7240 5745

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY COOPERATION

Meeting dates: 25 and 26 May 1993 in Porto (Portugal)

Countries concerned: France, Spain, Portugal

Sectors of activity: construction, public works

Organization: Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Paris. Mr. Leonard CUEVA — rue de Viarmes, 2 — F-75001 PARIS — Tel: (33) 1-4508 3679 — Fax: (33) 1-4508 3580

INTERMARMO EUROMEETING 1993

Meeting dates: 24, 25 and 26 May 1993 in Massa Carrara (Italy)

Countries concerned: Italy, France, Spain

Sectors of activity: marble and machines for quarrying and working stone

Organization: REGIONE TOSCANA — Ass. all'Industria, Artigianato e Commercio — Mr. Luigi BADIALI — via di Novoli, 26 — I-50127 FIRENZE — Tel.: (39) 55-437 7267 — Fax: (39)55-438 3940

INDUSTRIA MEDIO AMBIENTE

Meeting dates: from 24 to 26 May 1993 in Bilbao (Spain)

Countries concerned: France, Spain, United Kingdom, Belgium

Sectors of activity: environment

Organization: Adhésion et Associés — Mr. Laurent FERTE — rue de l'Ancienne Mairie, 9 — F-92100 BOULOGNE — Tel.: (33)1-4825 2604 — Fax: (33)1-4603 8626

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EUROTECH CAPITAL: seeking finance for high-tech companies

EUROTECH CAPITAL was launched in December 1988, and its purpose is to encourage investment by European venture capital companies in SMEs with transnational high-tech projects. With this in mind, the European Commission contacted European financial institutions with an investment capacity of at least 50 million ECUs, and which were prepared to accept reserving at least 20% for acquiring stakes in SMEs with transnational high-tech projects.

Under the label EUROTECH CAPITAL, a network of European venture capital companies undertook to invest an overall amount of about 170 million ECU in transnational high-tech projects. The network consists of 11 members to date: Techno Venture Management in Germany, Euroventures Benelux in the Benelux, Biotechnology Investment Limited, Rothschild in England, the Instituto Nacional de Industria in Spain, Sofinova, Innolion and Partech International in France, Sofipa and FIP in Italy, Eurosud in both France and Italy, and Gilde Investment Fund in the Netherlands.

To support the objectives of the EUROTECH CAPITAL programme, the Commission set up various services designed to ease the costs of identifying and evaluating projects. EUROTECH PROJECTS is a service for identifying transnational high-tech projects, intended for financial investors. The confidential database 'EUROTECH INVEST' lists the main transnational high-tech projects identified, whether they originate from Community research programmes or national programmes. It is accessible free of charge for any European company which wishes to benefit from financial support from venture capital companies. EUROTECH DATA is a service providing assistance for technical and commercial assessment of projects.

The sixth meeting of EUROTECH CAPITAL, organized by EUROVENTURES Benelux, was held in Zaventem (Belgium) on 19th March last. Focused on the theme of biotechnology, this meeting enabled European companies in this industry to make contact with venture capitalists belonging to the EUROTECH CAPITAL network, and to meet the people responsible for Community research and development programmes in the biotechnology field (BRIDGE, BIOTECH, etc.).

For further information: DG XVIII — Credit and Investments — Joël BERGER
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MINT: helping SMEs to adopt new technologies

MINT (Managing the Integration of New Technology) is a new action launched as part of the SPRINT programme (Community programme for innovation and technology transfer). Managed in a decentralized fashion by national or regional operators, based on proposals from the Member States, the MINT action will be complementary to similar actions which exist in Member States, and will be adapted to suit particular requirements. The objective of MINT is to promote the take-up of new technologies by SMEs, by calling on the services of consultants who specialize in managing innovation. The Member States nominated 24 coordination bodies at regional or national level, which will be responsible for selection, training and supervision of a number of experts who will carry out individual consultancy assignments. The consultant will assist the SME in developing a plan for adopting new technologies and management techniques (design, quality, expert analysis etc.) to meet actual requirements. Training workshops will be set up for companies with similar technological and commercial requirements. Following the analysis carried out in the MINT context, the SME could be given guidance about choosing the support mechanism most appropriate to its requirements.

For further information: Commission of the European Communities
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Fax: 4301/34544

SPRINT — Technical Assistance Unit — Jack BURGESS
119, avenue de la Faiencerie
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Tel.: 46 55 88
Fax: 46 55 50

ETP14: training executives in Japan

In order to improve the effectiveness of European companies in the Japanese market, the Commission of the European Communities has been organizing a training programme in Japan since 1979, for any company from the European Community with a significant export business. The programme is known as the 'EXECUTIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME' (ETP). Over an 18-month period, this programme aims to give young executives (40 to 50 each session) the necessary linguistic and cultural knowledge to do business with Japan. The first twelve months are devoted to an intensive Japanese course. This course is supplemented by a series of seminars, company visits and trips. The programme is backed up by 6 months of training in a company, so that the participants can gain experience of working in a Japanese company. Recruitment for the next programme (ETP 14) has already started. 'PA Consulting Group' has been asked to handle the pre-selection of candidates in the Member States of the Community. Applications are particularly welcome from small and medium-sized companies. Deadline: 1 July 1993.

For further information: Commission of the European Communities
DG I — External Relations — Japan Division — Rudie FILON
Rue de la Loi, 200 — B-1049 BRUSSELS — Fax: 299 0204

ENVIRONMENT: a Community ECO-AUDIT system

Based on a proposal from the European Commission⁵, the Council reached agreement on 22 March 1993 on a regulation allowing manufacturing companies who so wished to join a Community environmental management and audit system.

Throughout the European Community, manufacturing companies who so wish may join the system by registering with a national body designated by the government of the country. This body will verify that the company is complying with all the prevailing regulations and standards in the environmental field. To take part in the system, the company will also have to present the national authority with an environmental analysis and programme.

The analysis will contain a description of the plant and all the data connected with the 'ecological' characteristics of the company (consumption of raw materials, energy and water, polluting emissions, waste and noise). The programme will contain quantified targets for the company to improve the protection of the environment in its activities. The environmental analysis and programme will need to be validated by an independent specialist body or individual, and presented to the national authorities. For each site which is subject to audit, the companies will regularly have to demonstrate compliance with their programme, certified by an independent body, at regular intervals. They can publish the results. The list of all the sites registered in the Community will be published each year by the Commission in the Official Journal of the European Communities. The companies will be able to improve their brand image with the public, but they will not be entitled to mention their involvement in the system on their packaging or the products themselves, nor can they exploit it in advertising.

The Member States will be able to encourage participation by SMEs in the Eco-Audit. With this in mind, the Commission will present proposals to the Council for appropriate measures with a view to greater participation by SMEs, particularly by means of training, technical assistance and information. The regulation will be formally adopted shortly, after the texts have been finalized. It will be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

'YOUNG PEOPLE, BUSINESS AND EUROPE: MOBILITY, QUALIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT': The first European Conference for the mobility of Young Europeans will be held at the **Economic and Social Committee** of the European Communities in Brussels on **Tuesday 22nd and Wednesday 23rd June 1993**.

The Conference will bring together **250 representatives**, of socioprofessional organisations, company directors, and personnel managers from the twelve Member States of the Community.

For contact: ANSE — S. ABBO — 35, avenue de Ségur — F-75007 PARIS (France) — Tel.: (1)40.56.96.59 — Fax: (1)45.66.54.80.

⁵ COM(93)97 final — modified proposal for a Council Regulation allowing manufacturing firms voluntarily to join a Community environmental management and audit system.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

SECOND 'CARREFOUR D'AFFAIRES ET DE TECHNOLOGIES' 1993

Organized by the Industry Promotion Agency in cooperation with MIDESE BLENHEIM, the second 'Business and Technology Crossroads' will be held in Tunis (KRAM Exhibition Centre) from 9 to 11 June 1993. It will host three events:

- SAMEST 93 — a Mediterranean trade fair for subcontracting and supply industries;
- An Innovation and Technology Centre;
- And an INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP EVENT: this will encourage cooperation between Tunisian companies and those from the EC, the Mediterranean Basin, Asia, America and the Middle East, with a view to penetrating new markets, performing technology transfer, setting up joint ventures, negotiating sub-contracting operations. Customized, planned and targeted appointments will be organized between decision makers for direct negotiations. A catalogue is available in five languages. It groups together proposals for partnerships from some 600 Tunisian companies. Those seeking Tunisian partners can receive help from the BRE (Business Cooperation Centre), the EICs (EURO INFO CENTRES) and BC-NET (Business Cooperation Network), which is open to Tunisia.
This event is receiving Community financial support in the context of the ECIP and MEDINVEST Programmes (MED-INTERPRISE section).

For further information: Agence de Promotion de l'Industrie — 63, rue de Syrie — 1002 TUNIS BELVEDERE (Tunisia) — Tel.: 792 144 — Fax: 782 482

CEN STANDARDS GUIDE FOR ACCESS TO THE EUROPEAN MARKET

The European internal market has become a concrete reality for an ever increasing number of companies in the European Community. European standards are emerging as one of the key components which determine how the internal market functions in this new economic and technical area.

These standards are referred to in European legislation on safety, consumer and environmental protection, and public procurement. Many others contribute to the definition of market requirements, either for product certification or for production and marketing procedures such as quality assurance, electronic data interchange etc.

In order to guide all those who need to understand what is presently happening and help them take the appropriate initiative, CEN — The European Committee for Standardization — has published a new book in English: 'CEN Standards — Guide for Access to the European Market' (in A5 format, 400 pages, illustrated in colour).

For each of the main sectors (mechanical engineering, building, health care, information technology etc.), a detailed rationale is given for the work programmes, and highlighted by contributions from experts who sit on the policy-making boards and technical committees of CEN.

This book, which is available in English, can be obtained from CEN members or from its Central Secretariat in Brussels: CEN — rue de Stassart, 36 — B-1050 BRUSSELS — Tel.: 519 6811 — Fax: 519 6819, price 38 ECUs + postage (+ VAT in Belgium).

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